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*"In Washington's immigration-reform script, congressional Republicans have been cast as villains intent on blocking enlightened policies — but they are refusing to play the part of spoilers. They are instead spoiling for a fight they are confident they can win."*

-- Kate O'Beirne *National Review*

## **Winning on Immigration**

*The merits of guts*

KATE O'BEIRNE

While talking to reporters about immigration reform recently, Sen. John Cornyn, Republican of Texas, floated a tantalizing option available to the House that would bedevil the Senate. "What if the House passed just the enforcement provisions of the Senate bill and sent it back to us?" Cornyn wondered aloud. When he was asked whether he'd vote for just those sections of the Senate's "comprehensive" bill, he replied with a chuckle, "I'd sure take a look at it." Later that week, House Republican leaders announced plans to hold hearings across the country on border security and on the most controversial provisions of a bill they have dubbed the "Reid-Kennedy" bill; and the "Border Security First Act" was introduced in the Senate by Pennsylvania Republican Rick Santorum.

In Washington's immigration-reform script, congressional Republicans have been cast as villains intent on blocking enlightened policies — but they are refusing to play the part of spoilers. They are instead spoiling for a fight they are confident they can win.

Rather than merely blocking action on a Senate bill they refuse to support, a unified House GOP caucus has decided to go on offense in order to wring the maximum political credit from being on the right side of their reading of public opinion. Because House Republicans fear the appearance of compromising with

a Senate bill they are convinced is wildly unpopular, they have — according to a leadership aide — no intention of taking part in a conference to hammer out differences between the House and Senate unless “there is a sea change in either public or Senate opinion.”...

The mid-June Tarrance Group survey of likely Republican voters found that 75 percent favored tougher border security, a crackdown on employers who hire illegal workers, and earned legalization for illegal aliens. The survey asked respondents about a proposal under which current illegal aliens would have to pay a fine, pay taxes, learn English, and go to the back of the line before being granted citizenship. A House GOP leadership aide scoffed at the poll as providing what Republican members consider a misleading summary of the Senate plan. (For example, under the Senate’s bill illegal aliens will form a *wholly new* line — one that permits them to remain legally in the U.S.)...

While support for legalization of illegal aliens and guest-worker programs depends on how questions are phrased and what details are omitted, the overwhelming support for controlling the border is indisputable. So rather than being intimidated with the need to back “comprehensive” reform, congressional Republicans confidently favor a “consensus” reform that would dramatically reduce illegal border crossings. Republicans argue that “border security first” would avoid the costly mistake made in the 1986 immigration reform that promised border enforcement but only delivered an amnesty that encouraged more illegal immigration...

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